

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE FOR THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month! What are you planning to turn purple this year? Check out our Toolkit for ideas: http://www.opdv.ny.gov/public_awareness/campaigns/shinethelight/ During DVAM, post on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram with the hashtags #ShineTheLight and #NYSpurple.

Language Access

Given that approximately 2.5 million New Yorkers – nearly 10% of the state’s population – are limited English proficient (LEP), a significant number of people rely on language assistance in order to participate in government and community-based services, activities, and programs designed to meet the needs of all New York residents. This is particularly problematic when working with LEP survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, where language assistance also becomes a safety issue, especially since abusers often control and further isolate victims with limited English proficiency. Although resources for LEP individuals do exist, so, too, do confusion and misinformation about how to access and implement these resources in ways that are meaningful and affordable. However, information is available to help organizations and agencies develop appropriate, useful language access plans so that they can best meet the needs of all the people they serve.

For more information about Language Access, see Page 3.

Did you know...

In 2013, the NYS Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline responded to callers in the following 19 languages (listed in order by volume of calls): English; Spanish; Mandarin; Russian; Haitian ; Arabic; French; Bengali; Polish; Amharic; Japanese; Burmese; Greek; Hungarian; Portuguese; Punjabi; Swedish; Tigrinya; and Vietnamese.

This information was provided by the NYS Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline.

From the Executive Director



We hope everyone is enjoying the summer months.

In this issue, we are pleased to announce the completion of the 2013 [OPDV Annual Report](#). As you know, the Annual Report, a product of the NYS Domestic Violence Advisory Council, addresses policies and protocols that have the potential to impact anyone affected by domestic violence who comes into contact with the state’s systems. This Report is possible because of the services and information our state and local partners provide, and we are pleased to share the results of these shared efforts.

This issue of the OPDV Bulletin focuses on language barriers and language access within the context of domestic violence. In the Q&A, Yvonne Masse explains the challenges and safety risks that Limited English Proficient (LEP) survivors of domestic violence encounter, and provides essential information for agencies looking to develop a Language Access plan. As Ms. Masse states, “a key component of providing language access is providing meaningful access.”

In our feature article, “Eliminating Language Barriers in Domestic Violence Cases,” Suzanne duMont-Perez and Julie Metzger discuss LanguageLine Solutions® as one possible source of assistance for victims of domestic violence and the agencies and organizations that serve them.

We hope that you find this issue helpful in your continued efforts to ensure that all victims of domestic violence receive the services they need, regardless of their English language proficiency.

We wish you a safe and happy summer.

Gwen Wright
Executive Director

Eliminating Language Barriers in Domestic Violence Cases

Suzanne duMont-Perez, Government Relations, LanguageLine Solutions®, and Julie Metzger, Strategic Account Executive, LanguageLine Solutions®

Limited English Proficiency

Approximately 2.5 million New Yorkers, nearly 10% of the state's population, are limited English proficient (LEP). Under Title VI of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964, recipients of federal funding are required to ensure that LEP individuals have meaningful access to services. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires state and local government organizations and public accommodations to provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to ensure effective communication with individuals with disabilities. Organizations providing services to New York residents must take steps to enable effective communication for LEP and deaf and hard of hearing individuals. When working with victims of domestic violence whose safety is at risk, understanding and communicating with them in their language becomes even more critical.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), LEP victims face unique challenges when reporting domestic violence. Due to language barriers, LEP victims of domestic violence are unable to communicate their needs and concerns, and often don't understand their rights or options to get needed support. As a result, these individuals, and the professionals who assist them, often rely on the abuser to serve as an interpreter. Likewise, children or other witnesses may be asked to interpret on behalf of the victim – which puts both children and victim at risk while impacting the credibility of the information provided.

In addition to language barriers, culture can also influence whether a victim reports the abuse, accesses needed services, and responds to various intervention strategies. According to the National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence, cultural factors such as a strong orientation toward family and community should be central to interventions and programs aimed at curbing domestic violence in Latino communities. The organization also indicated that fear of deportation is a primary barrier preventing undocumented immigrants from seeking help from domestic abuse.

Resources and tools are available

First responders, law enforcement, health care workers, social service providers and others working with New York's LEP population should be provided with the tools and training needed to enable effective communication with LEP residents and to understand the cultural factors that may be keeping victims from accessing needed services.

For over a decade, LanguageLine Solutions has worked with organizations of all sizes to overcome language and cultural barriers, whenever and wherever they arise. In addition to working with the New York City Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence to ensure that language barriers don't prevent LEP residents from getting the assistance they need, LanguageLine Solutions has provided every precinct in NYC with a dual handset phone to provide immediate access to more than 200 languages via trained professional interpreters. LanguageLine Solutions also collaborated with New York City to develop a Police Resource Guide – a tool to assist NYC police officers in identifying the top languages they would encounter, to empower officers to identify and request the correct language when accessing LanguageLine services. The guide also lists the local domestic violence resources available in multiple languages. The NYC Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence also collaborated with LanguageLine Solutions to develop Public Safety Announcements (PSAs) for radio and via video, brochures, and flyers – all in multiple languages to ensure the city's LEP population was aware of their rights, options and the resources available to them.

National efforts

The New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence has utilized LanguageLine Solutions to publicize multi-language accessibility for their hotline and accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. The National Domestic Violence Hotline recently utilized social media to inform those impacted by domestic violence, including families, of the confidential hotline which includes access to a LanguageLine interpreter to assist LEP callers in more than 200 languages, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

All victims of domestic violence should be able to get the help and support they need despite their English proficiency, immigration status or cultural background. In order to ensure that your organization is utilizing the best practices outlined by the DOJ, please contact Julie Metzger of LanguageLine Solutions at jmetzger@language.com

"Tips and Tools Specific to Domestic Violence Service Providers and Specialists" (US Department of Justice)

- Shelters and service providers should be aware of languages commonly spoken in the community and develop appropriate protocols and resources.
- Partner with domestic violence service providers that focus on ethnic/immigrant populations.
- Do not assume that your organization is "off the hook" on providing language services.
- Consider hiring and training bilingual employees, and test them for competency in their bilingual ability.
- Make sure that those individuals are not connected to the client's community. If they are connected, make sure that they are trained on confidentiality as the interpreter may know the abuser or the abuser's family and can put the client in danger.
- Consider hiring professional interpreters where necessary and appropriate.
- Language access can be provided telephonically working with trained interpreters from other parts of the state.
- Have informational brochures available in multiple languages.

Q&A: Language Access



This Q&A was conducted with Yvonne Masse, former Project Coordinator at the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Q: Why is language access important to limited English proficient (LEP) survivors of domestic violence?

A: Language access is achieved when LEP individuals are provided the oral and written language assistance to gain meaningful access and an equal opportunity to participate in government and community-based services, activities, programs, or other benefits. By providing language assistance to LEP survivors of domestic violence, you eliminate or reduce LEP as a barrier to accessing the programs and services necessary to keep survivors safe and hold offenders accountable.

All of the barriers to safety that exist for English proficient survivors of domestic violence exist for LEP survivors. However, LEP survivors face additional obstacles when attempting to access services and programs that abusers can sabotage, especially when the abuser's English proficiency is greater than the survivor's English proficiency. This difference in English proficiency allows for the abuser's voice and version of events to be heard rather than the survivor's. When police, courts, domestic violence programs and others working with survivors of domestic violence provide language assistance, the victim's voice can be heard, and access to desired services can be obtained.

However, failure to provide language assistance may impede the only opportunity a survivor has to seek help. The costs of this

missed opportunity can not only lead to the survivor's distrust in the system's willingness to assist, but can empower an abuser, due to lack of accountability for their actions.

Q: How do I make sure my program/agency/organization's services are accessible to LEP survivors of domestic violence?

A: The first step toward making sure your services are accessible to LEP survivors of domestic violence is to create a language access plan. Such a plan will help make all of your communications (face-to face, phone, print, and web-based) accessible to LEP survivors of domestic violence. Your plan should address how to identify the most common language needs of the community you serve, and outline a process for identifying LEP survivors in need of language assistance. Your plan should also include:

- policies and protocols for how to identify, assess and use bilingual staff;
- how and when to use interpreters;
- how to decide which documents you will translate into other languages; and
- how to let LEP survivors of domestic violence know that language assistance is available.

In addition, always use plain language that is clear, concise and well organized in all of your communications, to ensure that the broadest range of individuals will understand you.

Q: Can't I use Google translate to provide language assistance?

A: Google translate and other translation software can be a convenient tool to answer simple language translation questions. However, a key component of providing language access is providing *meaningful* access.

Unfortunately, computer programs provide "word for word" language translations instead of conceptually and culturally accurate translations. Accurate translations and interpretations ensure that words without English equivalents are correctly communicated. This is especially important when working with survivors of domestic violence, since many languages do not have word equivalents for "domestic violence."

Q: If the survivor has a friend or family member who speaks English and we use them to interpret, does that count as providing language access?

A: It is not recommended to use a friend, family member, or any other person who is not a professional interpreter. Professional interpreters have been trained to provide accurate interpretations. Non-trained interpreters may only paraphrase or describe things from their own personal viewpoints. Very important meanings and details could be lost when paraphrasing. Additionally, a non-professional interpreter is not bound by confidentiality, and a survivor of domestic violence may not feel safe disclosing details of abuse in front of someone who may repeat the information.

Q: How can we afford to provide language assistance on a small budget?

A: Once your language access plan indicates how and when you will need to use professional interpretation and translation services, it is important to include these services in your budget. Since all federally funded programs are required to provide language assistance, money for interpretation and translation services should be a justifiable expense in any federally-sourced grant proposal.

GO PURPLE: Shine the Light on Domestic Violence This October!

"Shine the Light on Domestic Violence" is a campaign that connects communities across New York by turning the State purple during October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month. This is the seventh year of the campaign and it has grown every year! From skyscrapers to bridges, storefronts to shopping centers, purple lights illuminate the nights of October. People wear purple clothing and march in purple parades. Anyone can be part of the campaign.

What can you do? Visit our website and look at the [Toolkit](#) we have available.

We offer a variety of helpful resources such as suggestions for ways anyone can go purple, specific instructions on how to light a building purple, talking points that you can use to tell people about the campaign, a downloadable web banner, and a variety of publications you can download and print yourself. This year, Wear Purple Day is October 15, but you can wear purple any day during the month. Or all month long! (And please tell people why.)

Please join in, in any way you can. Tell us what you're doing by posting

on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram using the hashtags #ShineTheLight and #NYSpurple. It's free and you could be helping to save a life. Don't Do Nothing!



OPDV Welcomes Alicia Borns



I am Alicia Borns, OPDV's new Director of the Family and Victim Resources Bureau.

I come to OPDV with 22 years of domestic violence program work, most recently having worked at Equinox Domestic Violence Services for 15 years. I bring knowledge of domestic violence

services, individual and systems advocacy, program and policy development, and community collaboration, outreach and awareness. In addition to my experience, I have been blessed to work with many amazing advocates, mentored by several wise leaders and most importantly, the opportunity to learn about domestic violence from many courageous survivors.

I am pleased to be supervising a strong and talented group of staff here at OPDV. The Family and Victim Resources Bureau encompasses innovative domestic violence training provided to child protective and child welfare workers, local

Department of Social Services and

domestic violence liaisons, and the NYS workforce and their workplace domestic violence liaisons. We also provide services to victims of domestic violence who contact OPDV and serve as a resource for service providers, community professionals and state agencies. Additionally, we provide public awareness and outreach on issues such as elder abuse, and teen dating violence.

I have long admired the work of OPDV and am thrilled to be joining this wonderful team. I thank Gwen Wright for this amazing opportunity and look forward to working under her leadership.

Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Language Services Unit

The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) has the responsibility to provide reasonable foreign language translation assistance to non-English speaking persons who apply for or receive benefits under social service programs which the OTDA administers in an effort to ensure compliance with Executive Order 26 and Federal non-discrimination mandates.

Providing language access is critical to the mission of OTDA. We must be able to communicate with individuals despite their level of English proficiency, and we must ensure that lack of English proficiency is never a barrier for

individuals to access service.

In order to fulfill this responsibility, the OTDA offers in-house translations (written) and interpretation (oral) between English and Spanish, Chinese, Russian, and Arabic, and it coordinates translations into other languages through selected contractors.

Many OTDA materials, such as common forms¹, applications, manuals, brochures, client booklets are available in the six most common non-English languages spoken

¹Example: [Common Application](#) (LDSS-2921) for Temporary Assistance, Medical Assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Services including Foster Care and Child Care Assistance

in New York State as identified in Executive Order 26, namely Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Haitian Creole, Korean, Italian. OTDA added Arabic, based on the population it serves.

These materials are available at:

<http://otda.ny.gov/programs/applications/>

http://otda.state.ny.net/ldss_eforms/

The OTDA internet home page features an easy to locate [tab for free language assistance services](#). Clicking on this tab will provide access to further information in the covered languages, including forms that may be used to inform the agency of inadequate language assistance services.

NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence www.opdv.ny.gov

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